BLUNT to WALPOLE:

A

Familiar Epiſtle

In Behalf of The

BRITISH DISTILLERY.

———*And tho' I ſay it, there's never a woman in the pariſh that takes more care for an honeſt livelihood than my ſelf. I turn my hand to any thing to get a penny: ſometimes I ſell things in* Leaden-hall market; *and ſometimes I do an odd chare at one houſe, and ſometimes at another.—We* market-women *are up* early and late, *and work hard for what we have. We ſtand* all weathers, *and go thro'* thick and thin. *It's well known, that I was never the woman that ſpar'd my carcaſs; and if I ſpend three farthings now and then, in ſuch* ſimple ſtuff *as we poor ſouls are glad to drink, it's nothing but what's my own; I get it* honeſtly, *and I don't care who knows it; for if it was not for ſomething to* chear the ſpirits *between whiles, and keep out the* wet *and* cold; *alack-a-day! it would never do! we ſhould never be able to hold it; we ſhould never go* thorow-ſtitch *with it, ſo as to keep body and ſoul together.*——— Seſſions-paper, *May* 1725.

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BLUNT

TO

WALPOLE.

SIR *Robert*, tho' at your levee
A croud of authors there may be,
Who with beſeeching airs attend
On you, their only true blue friend:
Inſinuate their unlucky caſes,
And hint, how well they merit places:
Yet all their claims to your regard,
Are trifling, when with mine compar'd;

And ſo to think you cannot fail,
When you have heard me tell my tale.

Not for myſelf alone I plead,
More generous I: —— The life of *trade*,
The *revenue* of the royal houſe, and
The fate of *families* many a thouſand,
Are all concern'd in what's before us,
And join with my addreſs in chorus.

Methinks I hear you now cry *Humh!*
This muſt from ſome Diſtiller *come.*——
'Tis very true, — for who can gheſs
Erroneous from ſuch premiſes?

Not long ago, I knew the day,
When I could rent and taxes pay:
Each morning with my wife drink tea,
And who ſo happy then as we!

At night, to coffee-houſe repair,
And ſhine a politician there!
No creditor did I avoid,
And ſend down word I was abroad;
No dreary dun e'er twice came to me,
With — Blood Sir! pay me what you owe me!
Fearleſs of catchpole, with grave ſtate,
I boldly paſt the compter gate;
And if from friend behind, in joke,
My ſhoulder felt a ſudden ſtroke,
Surpriz'd, I never turn'd about,
And ask'd abruptly — At whoſe ſuit?

But from my landlord now I run,
And now the publican I ſhun:
Bohea and green no longer taſte,
But water gruel breaks my faſt:
At coffee-houſe, no more debate
About occurrences of ſtate:

My creditors may daily come,
And daily hear, I'm not at home:
The public road no more I take,
But thro' blind lanes and alleys ſneak;
This way and that, I turn my eye,
In conſtant dread ſome bailiff's nigh:
And whence this wretched change? In fact,
It comes from *The* GENEVA *Act*.

For ere the houſe had paſs'd the bill,
How often did I work my *ſtill?*
For this or that ingredient,
How oft I to the *druggiſt* ſent?
Or to the *grocer's* ſhop? or where *Kate*
Botanic-ſtall keeps in the market?
How frequently old casks to hoop, or
Make new, did I employ the *cooper?*
To what a ſum, at the week's cloſe,
My *porter's* bill for jobbs aroſe?

And how my *carman* jee-hoa'd *Dobbin?*
Ah, theſe were bleſſed days, *Sir* Robin!

But ſince the *Act* — ſcarce in a month
The *ſpirit* thro' my *worm-tub* run'th:
Of *ſugars, fruits, drugs, herbs* and *ſpices,*
I don't ſo much as know the prices:
My *cooper's* addice is ruſty grown;
My *porter* ſits, and makes his moan;
My *carman* ſtamps, and raves, and curſes,
For want of work t' employ his horſes.

Thus to *induſtry,* what a ſtop
Is the decline of *one* poor *ſhop?*
But what is *one* ſhop? --- let us rather
Take the *diſtillers* all together.
Think then, what devaſtation's made;
A ſtroke how fatal given to *trade!*
What a round ſum the *court* will miſs!
The *landed intereſt* how decreaſe!

If calculations, with a grace,
In poetry could have a place,
I'd ſhew, —— and not on *Woolſton's* ſcheme,
By allegory, type and dream;
But, in a literal ſenſe, and plain,
As *were* th' inſulting airs of *Spain*; *
The vaſt advantages, that will e'ery
Day proceed from the *diſtillery*,
When with encouragement it's bleſt;
And what be loſt when 'tis depreſt.

The muſe, I ſay, could I but get her,
To manage ſuch accompts in metre,
Should ſing; How *Britiſh diſtillation*
Invites the ſwain to *cultivation*;
How many hundred thouſand acres,
Unfit for *brewer's* uſe, or *baker's*,
Lay long unwounded by the plough,
Which well repay the tillage now.

* In the Reign of Queen *Eliz.*

What loſs the *farmer* did ſuſtain,
By wanting vent for damag'd grain;
'Till the *diſtiller*'s noble art,
Extracted thence, th' eſſential part.

How *malt* ſent up for *diſtillation*,
Improves the coaſting *navigation*.
How many jolly *ſailors* bred ——
——At this you laugh, and ſhake your head,
As if there was but little in it,
But, Sir, —— have patience for a minute:
Theſe very *ſailors*, mean and few,
As they perhaps appear to you,
Would make no more ado to kick,
The ſaucy *** to Old Nick;
Than, the prime gameſter of the town,
To tip a ſett of nine-pins down.

What trade to us the *maltſters* owe;
And how their *factors* wealthy grow.

Accrues

Accrues what profit to the *dealers*
In all th' ingredients for *diſtillers*,
What to th' *artificers* who form
The *ſtill*, the *back*, the *cask*, the *worm*
And all th' *et-cætera*, requiſite
A *ſhop* and *ſtill-houſe* to compleat.
Then what employment for the *poor*,
Will all theſe articles procure?

In fine, the muſe ſhould ſet ye down,
The great *exciſe* we bring the crown,
Whether for *malt*, or *ſpirits* made;
Beſides for *coals* the *duty* paid:
A plea, that may to you, ſeem rather
Better than all the reſt together.

Now if you ruin the *diſtillers*,
Who to the public are well-willers,
How muſt the *farmer* pay his rent,
When for his corn he has no vent?

Such

Such corn, as no man ever yet
For bread, or beer, accounted fit;
Tho' we from thence a ſpirit pure,
By fermentation, can procure.

Why let him, you perhaps will ſay,
Improve his land ſome other way.
But friend, —the lands that now produce
Such crops, for the *diſtillers* uſe,
Will never half th' advantage bring,
In any other earthly thing:
Their value therefore, muſt decreaſe,
As our demands are leſs and leſs.

Our coaſting *veſſels*, how can we
Full freighted now expect to ſee?
Or *maltſter*'s trade in good condition?
Or *factors* live by their commiſſion?
But name our caſe, and what a panic,
Shop keeper ſeizes, and *mechanic?*

So evidently do they find,
Their intereſt is with ours combin'd.

Unknowing where with work to meet,
Or how a maintenance to get;
What numbers of the *poor*, in town
And country, ſaunter up and down;
While others loiter at an *alehouſe*,
And merit, in due time, the gallows?
Whoſe ſtarving families to cheriſh,
Makes over-rates in every pariſh.

Why tho' their old employment fails 'em,
You'll ſay, *yet what a dèvil ails 'em,*
But that they quickly may be able,
To find new work as profitable?
——Ay, 'tis fine talking, on my word!
Money and time can they afford,
Strange buſineſs to acquire, and enter
On new vocations at a venture?

When,

When, ere they can proficients grow,
Their families may ſtarve, ye know.
Men now-a-days eſteem it ſilly,
To teach their arts to others freely:
Nor yet, has every one, a head
To learn new ways of getting bread.
Theſe difficulties get but o'er,
And *Walpole* then — here follow more.

Are you with any trade acquainted,
In which there is one workman wanted?
Employments, almoſt every where,
May half their old profeſſors ſpare:
Can then a novice hope to gain,
What will his family maintain?

Now do ſo much as turn your eyes,
To the late produce of th' *exciſe*;
And there, inſtead of an addition, ſee
The devil and all of a *deficiency*.

We know, that while the bill depended,
The *brewers* mighty things pretended:
They'd make up all defects, forſooth!
But do ye find they ſpoke the truth?

Now by what method you'll ſupply,
This loſs I can't deviſe, not I:
For ſay, what branch of trade is there,
That will a new taxation bear?
Are we not ſufferers thus? and you, Sir,
At ballancing accounts, a loſer?
So *Sampſon* (as believe good chriſtians)
To be reveng'd on the *philiſtins*,
To whom he had borne a grudge ſome years,
Pull'd an old houſe about his ears.

See here a ſcene of general woe,
That does from our misfortunes flow!
And other evils yet remain,
Which principally we ſuſtain.

When a fair proſpect does perſuade
A youth, to enter into trade,
Who, by an honeſt care and labour, wou'd
Live reputably in his neighbourhood;
He takes a houſe, and ſtocks a ſhop,
And proper offices fits up:
Th' expence, his fortune does employ,
The fruit of which he hopes t' enjoy:
But ſee! an unexpected blow,
Does all his flattering hopes o'erthrow.

A cordial dram, like *Cheſhire*-cheeſe, is
More valu'd as its age encreaſes;
And therefore, you muſt underſtand,
We kept large quantities in hand:
Not dreaming we ſhould be prohibited,
The means of having them diſtributed.

But now, a *licence* muſt be had,
Ere we can drive a retale trade;

For which, by every mother's ſon,
There muſt be twenty pounds laid down;
And this not once, but every year,
Tho' more than any ſhop can clear;
Where none, to drink exceſſive ſtay,
But take their glaſs and go their way.

The only men, if there are any,
Who can by a *licence* make a penny,
Are thoſe, who in ſuch manner uſe it,
As if their ſtudy was, to abuſe it;
Who rules and orders never mind,
Whoſe ſhops you may at midnight find
Throng'd, as with maggots is a cheeſe,
Or like *Ward*'s works with ſimiles.

Our art, obnoxious firſt to cenſure
Who made? who but theſe very men, Sir?
From whom elſe did a late *grand jury*
Take hints, t' exert a pious fury?

And who but theſe, by ill behaviour,
Loſt us the legiſlature's favour?

Yet ſo it is, theſe wicked whore-ſons,
Who are the only guilty perſons,
Inſtead of being ſuppreſt, in fact,
Securely thrive, beneath the *act*;
Tho' ſhops they keep, of ill report,
They ſwear they have a *licence* for't;
And point, to where you'll written ſee,
GENEVA SOLD BY AUTHORITY.

While we, peace-keeping ſpirit-venders,
Who never yet were deem'd offenders;
Who due decorum well obſerve,
Are in a hopeful way —— to ſtarve.
For *leave* to *ſell*, we cannot pay,
And muſt we *give* our goods away?
'Tis hard! --- But yet if drams compound,
Are in our hands at *chriſtmas* found;

A crown a gallon claims the officer,
By which we ſhou'd a greater loſs ſuffer.

Tho' when ſo deſperate is the caſe,
Men may be tempted to tranſgreſs;
And, finding thus their buſineſs fail,
Without a *licence* GIN retale.
For what great hazard can they run,
Who, tho' they offend, not muſt b'undone?
They timerous may begin indeed,
But bolder grow as they proceed.
Even ſo a buxom laſs, I wot,
Who greatly longs to know what's what,
Is notwithſtanding, ſore afraid
At firſt, of being by love betray'd;
Becauſe, poor thing, ſhe can't acquire,
A *licence* to indemnify her:
But when ſhe once has made beginning,
Undaunted drives the trade of ſinning.

More-

Moreover, there's another grief,
From which we fain would have relief.
We are prohibited by law,
The ſpirit under *proof* to draw.
An act would ſcarce be more ſevere,
Forbidding *brewers* to make *ſmall beer*.

Lord! what an outcry has there been,
About old women's drinking *Gin?*
As if it burnt their guts, and ſhrivel'd
Their skins, and made 'em look bedevil'd.
Meer calumny! for purpoſe ill
Deſign'd, — Howe'er, be that as 'twill:
Suppoſe the worſt that is pretended,
D'ye think the matter will be mended,
By making *Gin* and *Brandy* more
Strong, than was uſual heretofore?

The weaker ſpirits are, 'tis plain,
The leſs they intoxicate the brain.

Take half a pint of *full proof* ſpirit,
And try how well your head will bear it:
Next day, as much to *punch* convert,
And 'twill not do you half the hurt;
Tho' then, the quantity's encreas'd,
To thrice what 'twas before at leaſt.
For ſpirits, properly diluted,
Are to the conſtitution ſuited.
Thus innocent are our devices,
For ſelling drams at moderate prices.

But here's the devil! — Let a man
Uſe all the diligence he can;
Yet often, this is not enough,
To keep his goods exactly proof;
So many accidents befall,
As unaccountably ſpoil all.
Beſides, you'll not find every where, men
Who can a ſtandard *proof* determine.

A judgment is requir'd, that nice is,
Or we may ſuffer on meer gheſſes.

Now don't you take it in your head,
That what has here been ſung, or ſaid,
Contains a catalogue of all
Diſaſters, which attend our fall;
No, —— this of ſome is but a ſpecimen;
A ream of paper, to expreſs 'em in
The reſt require. ——However, you
May on a retroſpective view,
Of what the muſe has repreſented,
Judge, if the *general good's* augmented.
Judge, if its fit, that BRITAIN's *trade*
Should ſink, or be to *France* convey'd:
The old collections for the *court*
Decreaſe; the *landlord's* rent come ſhort;
Ten thouſand *families*, who deſerve
A better fate, be doom'd to *ſtarve*;

Ten thouſand more, to *jail* be ſent?
And all this, *only* to prevent,
Tho' all in vain, ſome *ſtroling punk*,
Or *worthleſs ſot*, from getting drunk?

If you but rightly underſtood,
The nature of theſe ſots, you wou'd,
As ſoon be hang'd as undertake,
A reformation *thus* to make.
Reform their manners! make 'em live well!
You may as ſoon reform the devil.
If you deprive 'em of their *Gin*,
Yet they'll with *Britiſh Brandy* ſin;
If *Britiſh Brandy* you advance,
To equal price with that of *France*;
It but the miſchief ſtill enlarges,
By putting them to greater charges:
For drink they will, what e'er th' expence is,
Till they no more can uſe their ſenſes.

True ſots are never over nice,
About the reliſh, or the price:
So that their booze, at any rate,
Will fumes afford, t' intoxicate.
'Tis not, that they're ſo fond of drinking,
But that they abhor the *thoughts* of thinking.

But can this trade be carry'd on,
You'll ſay, —*When all their money's gone?*
Lord help your head! — Why then for more,
They'll pawn, beg, ſteal, or play the whore.

Mean while, the *poor*, whoſe way of living
Makes requiſite a *dram* reviving,
Half naked, muſt without it go
Thro' wind and rain, thro' froſt and ſnow.
Cou'd theſe (as ſeldom can they) ſpare,
Three half-pence, for gut-ſtarving beer;
Like cordials, wou'd it warm the heart,
And joy and ſprightlineſs impart?

Colds,

Colds, agues, rheumatiſms, and death
Prevent, — at leaſt retard? — No, 'faith!

Your well fed *ſquires* and wealthy *grandees*,
Pamper'd and proud with plenty and eaſe;
Who night waſte in debauch and riot,
And ſleep till dinner time at quiet;
But little dream, of what the *poor*
In need of ſtand, and what they endure.
No wonder, if ſuch ſwear and damn,
At mention of a low-pric'd dram.

As parſon *Betty* well remarks,
In's *holding-forth* t' *Oxonian* clerks, *
Tho' ſome divinity profeſſors,
May be moſt damnable tranſgreſſors;
Yet no man ought from thence in wrath,
To caſt reflections on the cloth.

* An Ordination Sermon preach'd before the Univerſity of Oxford, *Sept.* 21, 1729. by *Joſeph Betty*, A. M.

Who

So, tho' there may b' among *diſtillers*,
Some authoriz'd *Geneva* ſellers,
Who tipling day and night encourage,
Againſt the trade why ſhould it ſtir rage?
Abſurd it is, t' impede the uſe
Of what e'er may be turn'd t' abuſe.

Now Sir, if ſots without compunction, will in ſpight of laws be drunk;
'Tis better ſure, that this be done,
With manufactures of our own;
By which the poor will be employ'd,
And many bleſſings more enjoy'd;
Than theſe be ſacrific'd, t' advance
The trade, the wealth and power of *France*.
But *Britain* ſure, has not ſo baſe
A ſon --- a ſlave! ſo void of grace,
As ſuch a thought to have in's head;
But ſhould it be, — and ſucceed!

Even

Even basket-women wou'd, with fury,
Cry out, the plot was laid by ***.

The miſchiefs of dram drinking fail,
To equal thoſe of wine or ale.

Dram drinkers, who are harden'd in ill,
Perhaps may roll along the channel;
Convene a mob of hooting boys,
Laughter excite and make a noiſe;
At worſt, by abuſing a good cordial,
May get into the round-houſe, or jail:
But tho' they follow ſuch a courſe,
Few but themſelves are for't the worſe:
Poor ſcrubs! No trades they have, nor dealings,
To ruin others by their failings.

But when your tradeſmen haunt an *alehouſe*,
Or at the *tavern* grow good fellows;
Their time and money ſot away,
How ſoon is there the devil to pay?

When

When one of theſe is doom'd to break,
Howmany hearts of courſe muſt ach?
For failing in a trade extenſive,
Muſt needs a fatal conſequence have.

I ſee no reaſon therefore, why *Humphry Parſons* ſhould in brewing triumph:
Why *vintners* ſhould be ſo careſt,
And poor *diſtillers* be depreſt:
Why't ſhould be deem'd a crying ſin,
To drink a little too much *Gin*;
And yet extravagant debauches,
With *wine* or *ale* eſcape reproaches.
'*But* little ſots *muſt yield to fate*,
'*That* great ones *may be drunk in ſtate!*

Far be it from the pious muſe,
Exceſſes, even in *Gin* t'excuſe:
But why ſhould men the *liquor* damn,
When 'tis the *vice* they ought to blame?

That we have *laws*, you may object,
Which do the *vice* alone affect;
Yet their old courſes men purſue,
As much as ever---Why, that's true.
But you another tale wou'd tell,
Were thoſe laws executed well:
If things were judg'd with impartiality,
And, far'd like beggars, rakes of quality:
If officers were well protected,
In acting as the law directed.
But who dares ſet my lord i'th' ſtocks;
Or put him under compter locks?

The *little vulgar* imitate
The manners of the *vulgar great*;
Like *courtiers*, *pedlers*, keep their words,
And *tinkers* will b' as drunk as *lords*;
Poor ſots think much the laws t' obey,
Before *their honours* lead the way;

Let

Let *theſe* bring temperance into faſhion,
And, hey boys! then for reformation.
Ah *Walpole!* wou'd not this be better,
Than trade to knock o' the head, or fetter?

Thus, with ſome reaſon and much rhime,
Fonder of truth than thoughts ſublime,
The muſe has made a preſentation,
Which needs no recapitulation.
And what d'ye think ſhe'd now be at?
Nothing but this, *Sir* Robert; That
Your vote and intereſt you wou'd give,
To let the poor *diſtillers* live.
This do —'Twill b' in your *Country's* favour,
And then you'll win her heart for ever:
Do it I ſay —— and don't affront,
The muſe of

Your Old Friend,

Grubſtreet, Dec. 20, 1729. A. Blunt.

FINIS.

ADVERTISEMENT.

Lately Publish'd.

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